KADAPA: The ancient Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple at Vontimitta in Kadapa district, with its unique architectural structure, is the best bet to be the Unesco world heritage site in AP.

The imposing temple, constructed during the 16th century, fulfils at least five of the 10 criteria required for declaration as a Unesco heritage site. Under the revised guidelines, only one of the 10 listed criteria is enough for a site to claim the world heritage status.

Temple chief priest, Veena Raghavacharyulu, told TOI that while the temple has everything to meet the Unesco requirements, the only hurdle is the need of vacant land around the site. He suggested that the government should acquire the private properties around the temple. About 100 acres is needed for the project and people are willing to part with land, the temple priest said.

The temple, with its three imposing towers (gopuram) and a sprawling open air mandapam with 32 sculptured pillars, fulfils the very first criterion "a masterpiece of human creative genius and outstanding universal value". It the best example of the Vijayanagara-Chola style of temple architecture.

Though the state government handed over the temple to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams for maintenance in 2015, no serious efforts have been made to showcase Vontimitta temple as a world heritage site.

The temple also fulfils criteria II, III and IV as Vontimitta exhibits an "important interchange of human values on developments in architecture or technology, or monumental arts."

It bears "a unique or exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition", and it "stands as an outstanding example of
architectural ensemble that illustrates significant stage in human history". The temple also fulfils criterion No. VI as "it is directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, beliefs, artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance".